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Afghanistan Situation Report

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21 June 1983

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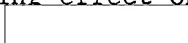
AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT

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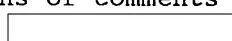
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Afghan insurgent raids across the Soviet border have had a negligible military impact, although they probably bolster insurgent morale. 

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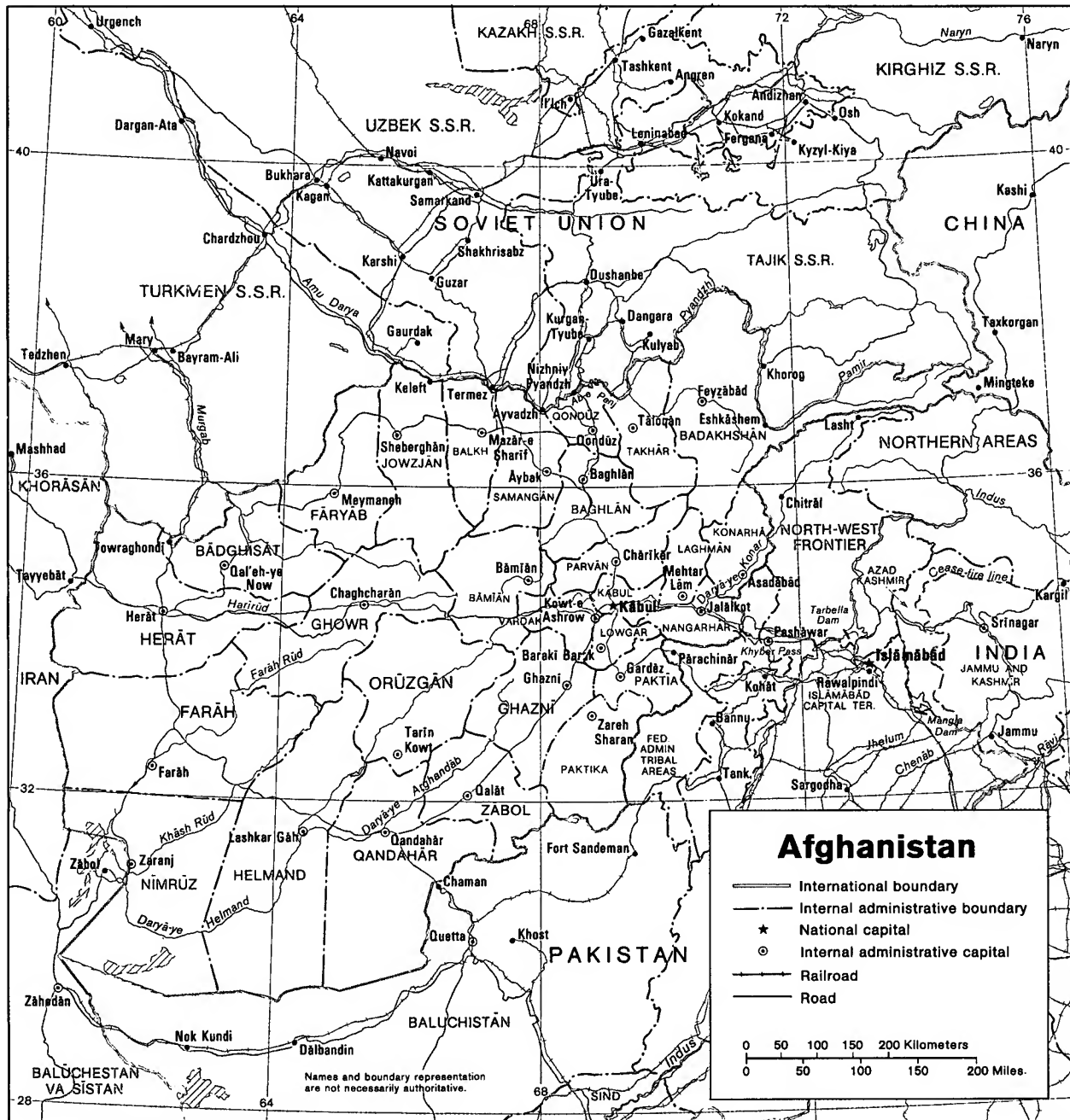
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FOOD SHORTAGES IN SOUTHWEST

The war in southwestern Afghanistan has had a devastating effect on the food situation, reducing farm output and disrupting internal foodgrain distribution, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]
high levels of malnutrition among refugees and wounded insurgents during the first half of 1983. Crop yields have reportedly dropped sharply because of problems with seed and lack of sufficient equipment, fertilizer, pesticides, and labor. [REDACTED]

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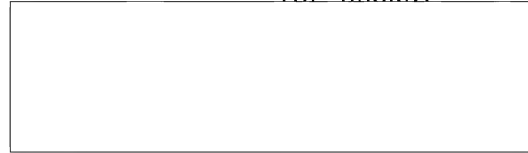
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Comment: We believe that disruptions in distribution rather than overall supply shortfalls are the immediate cause of food shortages and the threat of famine. Even under normal conditions, most of Afghanistan is somewhat dependent on outside supplies. The public distribution network and private farmers normally assured that foodgrains were moved from surplus areas.


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Mass starvation is currently unlikely because private emergency and seed stocks could be eaten, and the flow of refugees to neighboring countries could increase. 

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PERSPECTIVE

INSURGENT RAIDS ACROSS THE SOVIET BORDER

Afghan insurgent raids across the Soviet border have had a negligible military impact and pose no threat to the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. Although the raids have been sporadic and small scale, they probably have heightened Moscow's concern about border security and the stability of its ethnic minority areas close to the border. The raids may also marginally raise Soviet military costs by tying down additional forces in border security. From the insurgents' standpoint, the infrequent forays mainly help to maintain morale and may enable insurgents to procure limited amounts of supplies.

Border Situation

Historians generally agree that the Tajik, Uzbek, and Turkmen peoples who were divided by the delineation of the Soviet-Afghan border in the 19th century have always regarded it as an artificial imposition of colonial mapmakers. The establishment of the Soviet presence in Central Asia caused armed resistance--in many ways similar to the present Afghan resistance movement--that peaked in the early 1920s but was not finally crushed until the 1930s. That resistance was periodically aided by peoples of northern Afghanistan, and after that resistance failed, many Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Turkmens fled across the border to settle out of reach of Soviet control.

On at least the Afghan side of the border, a folk memory of that struggle has remained alive, according to Western journalists. That memory has emphasized hatred of Soviet-style control and of ethnic Russian domination. Within the USSR, political and police methods have kept this hostility under control, but Soviet authorities have always been apprehensive about it. Such concern may have been a factor in the Soviet decision to invade Afghanistan.

Soviet Border Security

The USSR's sensitivity about its borders has prompted strict security along them, with the Soviet-Afghan border being particularly well

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guarded. KGB Border Guards maintain careful control over the populated parts of the border region and closely monitor civilians in the area,

[redacted] The KGB's activities are in accord with a Soviet law that establishes a "forbidden zone" 30 kilometers deep along all USSR borders. Imagery indicates that there are about 100 outposts along the approximately 2,500-kilometer border and an estimated 8,000 to 12,000 guards, who could be augmented as necessary by approximately 8,000 regular army troops in the area. Civilian residents of the zone are registered; travelers are checked for appropriate entry stamps and for legitimate reasons for entry; residents are warned to report unusual activity or the appearance of strangers. [redacted]

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Physical security along the Soviet side of the border--defined by a river in its more populous parts and running through high mountains and deserts in other stretches--varies according to the terrain. Imagery indicates that heavy security--a combination of nearly impenetrable manmade barriers, alarm devices, and armed guards--protects about 60 percent of the border, the portion that could easily be traversed. Watchtowers in heavy security areas are usually at one-to-two-kilometer intervals. Medium security--with fewer outposts and manmade barriers--exists along about 35 percent of the border, where rugged terrain, sparse population, and the lack of major transportation networks make crossings more difficult. In medium-security areas, watchtowers are usually at 15-to-40-kilometer intervals. The remaining five percent of the border area has only light security. This area, mostly along the Pyandzh River (the upper Amu Darya), is devoid of transportation routes, settlements, or border outposts, and it features extremely rugged terrain, particularly on the Soviet side. This area contains no border guard outposts but is probably patrolled periodically by air and monitored by means of remote surveillance or listening posts.

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Insurgent Raids and Forays

The evidence on raids into the USSR [redacted]

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[redacted] indicating "undeniably" that such raids have occurred, though they may have been little more than cattle-rustling expeditions. Moreover, Soviet media have periodically hinted that there is illegal cross-border traffic. [redacted]

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forces of the Hizbi Islami insurgent group in Qonduz Province and Jamiat forces in Takhar Province occasionally mine roads across the river. [REDACTED]

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Other Support

Any insurgent contacts across the border probably provide psychological benefits--a mutual strengthening of morale and exchange of views on resistance to the Soviet and Afghan regimes. The Jamiat-i-Islami claims to have distributed 3,500 membership cards to Soviet Turkmens to boost morale/ [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] 3,400 Jamiat membership cards have been distributed to Soviet Tajiks, with the Jamiat receiving clothes and stolen sheep in return. Also, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Afghan and Soviet Tajiks exchange views on means of opposition, with the Afghan Tajiks trying to discourage their kinsmen in the Soviet Army from participating in counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan. We believe such requests may have prompted a few defections and some covert help to the resistance from Tajik troops in Afghanistan. [REDACTED]

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Soviet Countermeasures

Soviet countermeasures have included enhancing border security and using informants. In one case, [REDACTED] about 200 Soviet troops in Balkh Province, near Termez, strung barbed wire and laid mines along the Afghan side of the Amu Darya River to prevent insurgent crossings. At another point in the same region, the

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Soviets have increased the number of border posts and repositioned watchtowers because of the number of raids, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Soviet countermeasures on Afghan soil are hindered by the extensive control exerted by the insurgents. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Soviet and Afghan forces control only the major transportation routes through Afghanistan's border districts. Another Soviet countermeasure, the use of informants of Tajik origin, has prompted insurgents to restrict their relations to trusted family members living in the USSR [REDACTED]

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Conclusion

From the Soviet standpoint, the raids may intensify a long-standing, general concern about the security of the USSR borders. That concern may harden Moscow's resolve to consolidate its control over Afghanistan.

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The primary benefit of the insurgent crossings, however exaggerated the reports may be, is probably the bolstering of morale, along with increasing costs for the Soviets and the tying down of some forces. More frequent raids would probably tie up additional Soviet forces and raise Soviet costs further. But the obstacles--both military and logistic--to expanding the scope and effectiveness of insurgent raids will probably remain so considerable as to preclude any notable political or military insurgent successes. [REDACTED]

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